

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Claims 1-4 are pending herein. The specification has been amended hereby as shown in the substitute specification paragraphs on page 2 of this Amendment.

Applicants respectfully submit that the changes to the specification were made merely to correct minor matters of form only, and that no new matter has been added.

1. Examiner Thomas is thanked for courtesies extended to Applicants' representatives during a telephonic interview on March 29, 2004, the substance of which is incorporated below.

2. Claims 1-4 were rejected under §102(b) over Kitabayashi. Applicants respectfully traverse this rejection.

Independent claim 1 recites an electrostatic chuck having an insulation layer including a mount plane on which a wafer is mounted, an inner electrode provided in the insulation layer, and projecting portions protruding from the mount plane which include contact planes that contact the wafer. A backside gas flows in a space defined by the mount plane, the projecting portions and the wafer such that the wafer is attracted to the mount plane so as to maintain the temperature uniformity of the wafer. The total area of the contact planes of the projecting portions is in a range of 5% to 10% of the area of the inner electrode, and the height of each projecting portion is in a range of 5 μm to 10 μm .

During the telephonic interview, it was explained that the height limitation recited in independent claim 1 does not appear to be disclosed or suggested in Kitabayashi. Upon further examination of Kitabayashi, Examiner Thomas tentatively agreed that Kitabayashi does not disclose or suggest that the height of each of the projection portions is in a range of 5 μm to 10 μm , as recited in claim 1. Applicants respectfully submit that the criticality of the height range of the projecting portions recited in claim 1 is clearly demonstrated in Table 2 of the specification, for example.

Since the applied reference does not disclose each and every limitation recited in independent claim 1, Applicants respectfully submit that independent claim 1

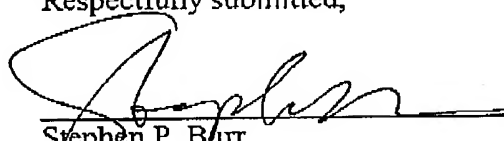
defines patentable subject matter over Kitabayashi. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully request that the above rejection be reconsidered and withdrawn.

If Examiner Thomas believes that contact with Applicants' attorney would be advantageous toward the disposition of this case, he is herein requested to call Applicants' attorney at the phone number noted below.

The Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge any additional fees associated with this communication or credit any overpayment to Deposit Account No. 50-1446.

Respectfully submitted,

March 30, 2004
Date


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